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## EDITORIAL

# Abecedarium: Who Am I? I'...

*Dear reader and, more to the point, dear colleague,*

I was one of your own – and some would even say the first. Yet, nothing foreshadowed it. Born in 1827, having completed my studies, I, like my contemporary, Viscount Chateaubriand, entered the diplomatic corps. Only later, at the age of 23, in the turmoil following the revolution of 1848 in France, did I choose medicine. Romanticism? Be that as it may...

I rose to the rank of Professor of Medicine, and then decided to devote myself entirely to laryngology. In 1854, the tenor and renowned singing teacher Manuel Garcia had been walking in the gardens of the Palais Royal in Paris, designed our laryngeal mirror which he called "Laryngoscope". Submitted to the Royal Society of Medicine in London but regarded as a mere physiological curiosity with no real scientific future, his brainchild was fortunately, taken-up and developed by Ludwig Türk in Vienna and Johan Czermak in Pest and this invention launched our specialty, of which the great Armand Trousseau had some years earlier laid the foundations.

In Paris, I set up and ran the first hospital consultation in laryngology. But that is not the main point. I had two friends and colleagues: the laryngologist Maurice Krishaber, born in Feketehegy, Hungary, in 1836, and the otologist Jules Ladreit de la Charrière, successor to Jean-Marc Gaspard-Itard at the Rue-Saint-Jacques Institute for Deaf-Mutes. Europe was in intellectual effervescence; learned societies and journals were flourishing; but otorhinolaryngology as such did not exist as a specialty. Our reports were tucked away in medical or surgical journals, and we labored under a lack of scientific and literary recognition. The *Archiv für Ohrenheilkunde* was the first journal to be exclusively dedicated to otology, and came out in 1863. From the warfare between the Viennese rivals Joseph Gruber and Adam Politzer came forth a competitor, the *Monatsschrift für Ohrenheilkunde*, in 1867. What was needed was a journal uniting otologists and laryngologists and giving its rightful place to rhinology. In 1875, Maurice, Jules and I announced our determination to "bring together in a single publication the affections of which otoscopy, laryngoscopy and rhinoscopy enable the study" and

founded the forebear of the very journal that you have in your hands right now. This was well before the first chair of otorhinolaryngology in France was established in Bordeaux in 1913. We called it the *Annals of Diseases of the Larynx and Ear (Annales des Maladies du Larynx et de l'Oreille)*, adding two years later "...and Related Organs" (Fig. 1). Our editorial board was made up of giants: Morell MacKenzie, Politzer, Schrötter, Labbé, Proust (whose son, Marcel, went on to become a star of another kind of literature) and many others were so kind as to help us. The headache was to ensure quality of writing. Whether out of laziness or ignorance of the work of their colleagues, authors of the time such as Duchenne de Boulogne would often send us articles that were far from scientific if not downright plagiarism. I believe things are not that much better in your own day: I've heard that, with your computers and Internet, many so-called authors are in fact cut-and-paste artists to a varying degree, with an unfortunate tendency to "forget" certain colleagues when it comes to the References section. Truly "original" articles are few and far between. Self-plagiarism and the trick of getting the same article or bits and pieces of it published under a creative variety of titles is a bad habit that you have apparently conserved. The fact that your precious academic careers are subject to obsessive assessment by number of publications and the sacred H-index has probably got a lot to do with it.

With the passing years, the *Bulletin et Mémoires de la Société Française d'ORL* came out in 1883, the *Archives Internationales de Laryngologie, Rhinologie et des Maladies des Premières Voies Respiratoires et Digestives* in 1887, the *Bulletin de la Société d'ORL de Lyon et de la Région* in 1931 and finally the *Cahiers d'ORL et de Chirurgie Cervico-Faciale et d'Audiophonologie* in 1965, to give birth in 2010 to the current *Annales Françaises d'Otorhinolaryngologie et de Pathologie Cervico-Faciale* and its globalized avatar, the *European Annals of Otorhinolaryngology Head and Neck Diseases*. You certainly took your time to learn that Unity is Strength, and that simultaneous publication in French and in English is the way to guarantee an international audience for French otorhinolaryngology.

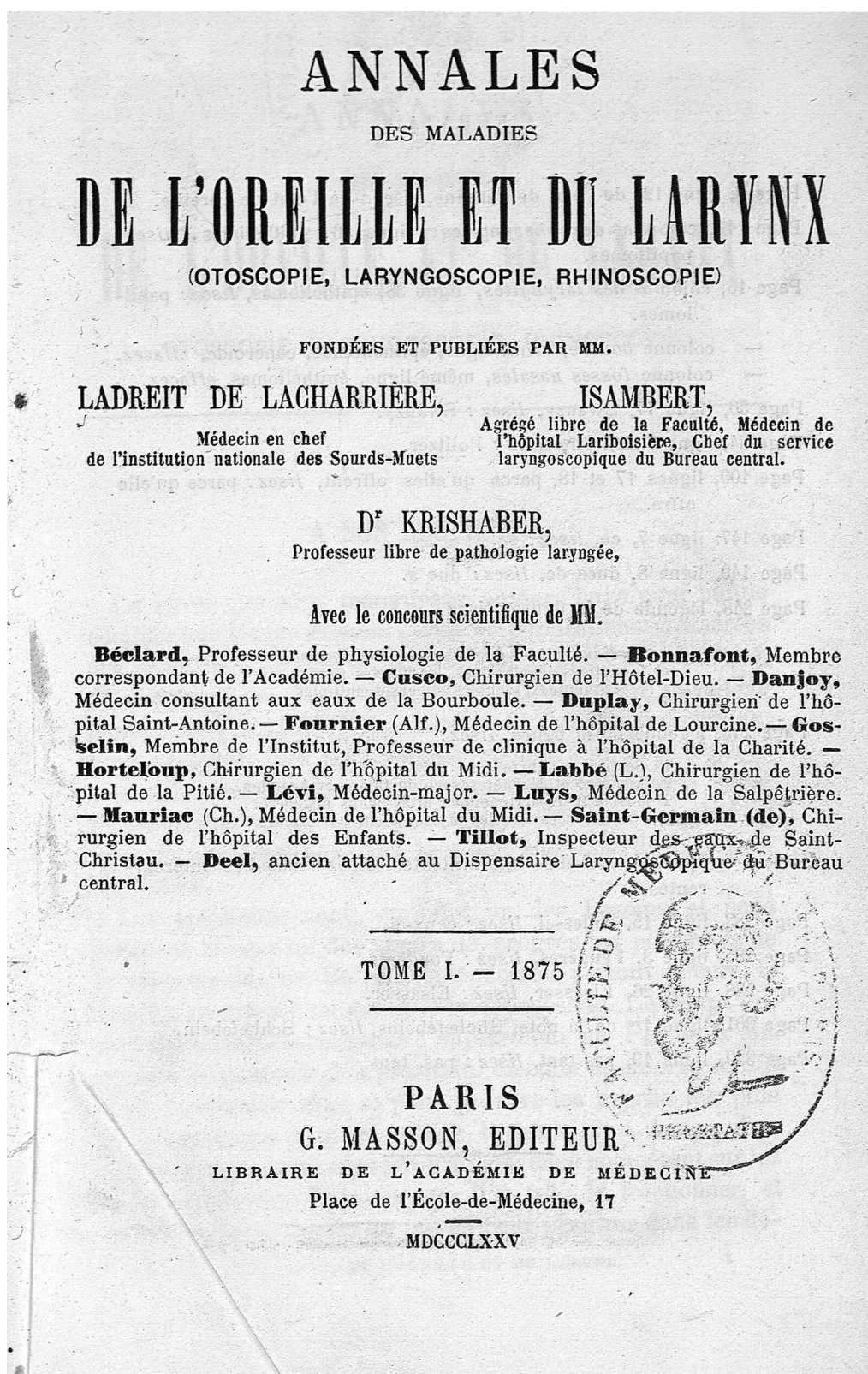


Figure 1 1<sup>st</sup> edition of the *Annales des Maladies du Larynx et de l'Oreille et des Organes Connexes* (© Biu Santé, Paris).

Jules Ladreit de la Charrière, little known despite his herculean work (the H-index wasn't his problem and he never published a lot!), left us in 1903. Maurice Krishaber, a great and prolific author in a wide range of fields, succumbed to

pneumonia in 1883. I, myself, died suddenly in 1876, aged only 49, after having described a large part of laryngeal pathology. Let us never forget, in the words of Longfellow in 1839 ("A Psalm of Life" in "Voices of the Night") and

Charles Baudelaire in 1857 (*"Le Guignon"* in *"Les Fleurs du Mal"*), that (as Hippocrates was the first to point out) *"Art is long and time is fleeting"*. But it consoles me to know that some of you still meet in the club that was set up in 1979 by former French university hospital fellows and which, like the pharyngeal tuberculosis that plagued the great Frédéric Chopin, bears my name.

I was, am and shall be,  
Ever yours,  
Emmanuel Isambert.

## Disclosure of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest concerning this article.

O. Laccourreye\*

Université Paris Descartes Sorbonne Paris Cité, service  
d'oto-rhino-laryngologie et de chirurgie cervico-faciale,  
HEGP, AP-HP, 20-40, rue Leblanc, 75015 Paris cedex 15,  
France

I. McGill

Place du Plâtre, 69930 Saint-Laurent-de-Chamousset,  
France

A. Werner

18, rue de la Ferme, 92200 Neuilly-sur-Seine, France

\* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: [ollivier.laccourreye@egp.aphp.fr](mailto:ollivier.laccourreye@egp.aphp.fr)  
(O. Laccourreye)